

[0024] In an example embodiment of the invention, a person can decide to go to a baseball game while they are eating dinner at a location near the ballpark. The person can use their handheld portable computing device, such as a Hewlett Packard Jornada® or Palm Pilot®, to buy a ticket. The portable computing device can be equipped with a GSM or cellular modem that communicates with a wireless computer network or the Internet. This allows the person to purchase a ticket from an Internet web server or some other secure electronic ticketing computer. Alternatively, the person can use a conventional modem and connect through a land-based telephone line. Once the ticket has been purchased, the person can proceed directly to the baseball game. The person will then enter the venue when the ticket receiving unit and ticket taker scan their electronic ticket directly from the screen of the portable computing device.

[0025] In order to avoid the counterfeiting of the electronic tickets, security measures can be implemented within the ticket and/or scannable barcode, symbol, or icon. For the purpose of enhancing authenticity, the barcode can be generated using an encryption algorithm based on information such as the date, location, and type of event. This way only a very small subset of barcodes is valid and only for a limited amount of time. Additional standard securities that involve procedures such as the cross checking of the purchasing credit card, driver's license, etc., at the gate can be incorporated as well.

[0026] For the purpose of enhancing security involved with the transfer of tickets, data transfer checks and encryption can be incorporated into the ticket transfer process to guarantee that the ticket transfer is complete and has not been

corrupted or compromised. For example, a cyclic redundancy check or message digest can be included during the transfer.

[0027] In one embodiment, the invention is a method for electronic ticket recognition and acceptance as illustrated in FIG. 3. The method includes the step of facilitating a purchase of an electronic ticket from a networked ticketing computer 82. Another step is downloading the electronic ticket to a portable computing device having a data output 84. A following step is enabling activation of the electronic ticket to communicate the electronic ticket via the data output 86. The previous step allows the electronic ticket to be optically communicated to a ticket receiving unit 88. The optical communication can take place using a visual symbol such as a bar code.

[0028] Once the electronic ticket has provided entry to the event, the ticket can also be used for other amenities in addition to the event entry. One amenity that can be provided to the person holding the electronic ticket is a discount for items at the concession stand. Again, the ticket can be scanned or activated as described above to receive the discount on the concession items. For example, the promoters of the event may provide a 25% discount on sodas purchased by electronic ticket holders. Certain amenities can also be provided as part of the electronic ticket. If the event promoters desire to give a free dessert or free dinner to the ticket holder, then the ticket can be scanned or activated at the location where that amenity is served. Further, promoters of the electronic ticket can provide a sweepstakes where a random purchaser of an electronic ticket is electronically informed that they have won a certain item such as a food product.

[0029] The amenities described above are examples of the benefits of using an “enhanced e-ticket.” This is the idea that a ticket can be used to enable a suite of enhanced services in and around a venue. The scenario above can also be extended to showcase an example of a personalized service such that the discount offered is *personalized* for each customer. The discount offered can be individually tailored based on information such as whether one is a season ticket holder or not, the number of games the person has attended this current season, etc.

[0030] Another type of amenity that can be provided is an event map. This scenario describes an example of a service that can be both *personalized* and *localized*. Information is *personalized* if it changes based on the identity of the person viewing it, and information is *localizable* if it changes based on the location of the person viewing it. In this embodiment, the electronic key allows an event map to be downloaded and activated via remote communication with a networked server. Preferably, the event map can be downloaded wirelessly from information ports located throughout the stadium or hall where the event is being held. Alternatively, the event map can be downloaded to the portable computing device wirelessly, via modem, or over a similar electronic connection from the Internet.

[0031] An example of the benefit of an enhanced e-ticket event map will now be discussed as illustrated in FIG. 4. Suppose a ticket holder is lost in a stadium and is unsure of how to get to his seat. The ticket holder can use their portable computing device 100 to communicate with one of the many information ports 110 conveniently located throughout the stadium. Accordingly, the ticket holder receives a customized map from an information server 120 via an infrared transmission 130 from the